

Toby Buckle, Greg Sargent / June 17, 2026

TIME TO ACT

Elon Musk's Race War Just Took Darker Turn—Time for a Global Response

The violent fascist riots in Belfast reveal the future that the trillionaire really wants. We need an international movement to constrain him.



Tesla CEO Elon Musk in Davos, Switzerland, on January 22

KRISZTIAN BOCSI/GETTY IMAGES

If you were on the verge of becoming the first trillionaire in human history, with the press breathlessly reporting on your every move, that would probably be your focus. Yet in the days before SpaceX's initial public offering vaulted Musk into the 13-digit wealth club, the tech mogul's mind was elsewhere—a white man in Belfast had been viciously stabbed by a Sudanese immigrant, and it provided Musk an opening.

In numerous social media postings, Musk highlighted the crime in starkly racist terms. Several nights of violent anti-immigrant pogroms orchestrated by fascist mobs followed. It was a telling confluence of events: Musk's extraordinary wealth is fueled by investors' bedazzlement at his techno-utopian schemes. But the Belfast conflagration revealed the other side of his future vision: his belief that the white populations of the world must violently subjugate the nonwhite enemy in what he sees as a

multicontinental, Armageddon-like Total War for global racial supremacy.

As the bedlam raged in Belfast after the stabbing—resulting in far-right rioters torching cars, buses, and even the homes of immigrants—Musk egged it on. Using X—the platform he acquired precisely for moments like these—he posted locations for groups of rioters to congregate. He elevated vile, overtly fascist and white-supremacist exhortations. When one far-right British politician called for the prosecution of officials who “placed dangerous third world savages in our communities,” Musk replied: “This is the way.”

These developments graphically illustrate the future that Musk truly envisions. They also demonstrate that Musk will use his stratospheric wealth and influence to incite untold levels of global fascist violence going forward. Which leads to an unavoidable conclusion: At some point, friends of liberal democracy throughout the advanced democracies—including future liberal governments—will simply have to come together in a concerted and deliberate way to constrain Musk and all he’s unleashing. Whenever Democrats take back power in the United States, this must be squarely on the agenda.

In a very real sense, the fires in Belfast illuminate the emerging outlines of that coming struggle. Musk’s involvement in British politics has tracked with his growing fantasies about global race war. Last fall, he compared nonwhite immigrants in the U.K. to orcs—the dangerous, inhuman monsters from *Lord of the Rings*—and enthusiastically endorsed a tweet claiming: “If White men become a minority, we will be slaughtered.” As Musk has watched the anti-immigrant far right grow in the U.K., he has gravitated toward extreme versions of “great replacement theory,” ones that posit a far-reaching plot to violently eliminate whites or breed them out of existence entirely.

A coming-out moment for Musk came last September, when he spoke via video link to a “Unite the Kingdom” rally—a gathering of far-right and anti-immigrant groups organized by Tommy Robinson, a British white nationalist with a long history of thuggery. Musk promoted the event on X. He addressed a crowd of more than 100,000 people, warning of the dangers of multiculturalism and “uncontrolled migration.”

“Whether you choose violence or not, violence is coming to you,” Musk warned. “You either fight back, or you die.”

In the United States, Musk had already been experimenting with a consistent trope in fascist rhetoric: seizing on a crime committed by an individual member of a minority group and claiming that it shows the innate murderous tendencies of the group as a whole. The real claim here is that these isolated horrific acts “reveal” the whole minority group’s disguised *genocidal* intent toward white peoples—and suggest that *this is why* the group has deviously infiltrated white countries and communities.

Musk zealously adapted this to the U.K. context. In one case he suggested that “the gentles of the English shires”—that is, the descendants of the imagined, unsullied Anglo-Saxon island existence mythologized by white nationalists everywhere—will be “brutally murdered” if the “tide of illegal immigration is not turned.”

With the Belfast stabbing, Musk hit paydirt. After a Sudanese man who'd legally sought asylum brutally mauled a white man, video of the attack rapidly circulated online, amplified by Musk. The perpetrator was swiftly arrested and charged, but that didn't stop loud demands for "justice," which actually meant collective retribution against all nonwhite and foreign-born residents. Rioters clashed with police and threw bricks. Hooded masked men roamed in large gangs, setting up roadblocks to check cars for immigrants. The Police Federation of Northern Ireland, hardly an overly woke institution, explicitly described the rioters as "fascist."

Even as his trillion-dollar payday came together, Musk promoted a pamphlet calling for action against this supposed "invader attack on our people." He amplified far-right politicians demanding retribution against "third world savages." He posted a reminder of his September exhortation that "you either fight back, or you die."

These were violent, fascist ethnic purges—or pogroms. As an Indian man who's lived in the U.K. for 25 years told the BBC: "It was horrible. It was like a war zone. Everything was burning." The man added: "I pay my taxes. I am British." Yet he's preparing to leave: Across Belfast, others are finding themselves forced to make similar decisions.

It's instructive that amid the violence, Musk endorsed a call for "Reconquista," an allusion to Christian military campaigns to retake the Iberian peninsula from Islamic forces. (Modern-day keyboard fascists have long rather pathetically imagined themselves to be akin to Charles Martel, who turned back the Muslims at Tours in 732.) And Musk boosted a call for the removal of millions from the U.K.

The turmoil has now subsided, and soon after, thousands demonstrated in Belfast against the pogroms. But nonetheless, Musk's influence on events there must be reckoned with. While what transpired is not all about Musk—political violence in the region has deep roots, and many homegrown demagogues in the U.K. have demonized immigrants there—the riots demonstrated a real-world manifestation of the racial apocalypse Musk wants and may increasingly be in a position to summon into being.



By endorsing Reconquista, Musk is amplifying one of the clarion calls of the European far right and, increasingly, the American right, as well: "remigration." This is the idea that saving Western civilization (as Musk imagines it) requires the forced expulsion of huge numbers of immigrants, especially Muslims, and even untold numbers of their descendants. In response to a missive about white people potentially becoming a minority in New Zealand, Musk posted recently: "The doom of Western Civilization must be averted!"

In other words, nonwhite immigrants are by definition invaders who threaten "Western civilization" wherever they infiltrate, from New Zealand to Belfast to Minneapolis, where Musk called for a military crackdown on pro-immigrant protesters. True, Musk employs high-skilled immigrant tech workers and has defended the need for them. But this does not constitute a general tolerance of immigration or a desire to see immigrants integrate at scale within the embattled outposts of Western civilization.

Indeed, in some respects, Musk's vision is a classically fascist one: He appears to believe that race and culture are inseparable. Fascism is a set of interconnected values and yearnings that center the state, the nation, violence, masculinity, and the rebirth of a mythic, heroic past. It's an ideology of palingenetic ultranationalism: Though the nation is a broadly contested concept, to the fascist, the nation is defined, in an almost transcendent spiritual sense, by culture and race. These are inexorably linked: Only certain races are capable of producing certain cultures.

Thus it is that Musk is also obsessed with white fertility—he has done his part to save civilization by siring over a dozen children by multiple women. There is no doubt that this is deeply entangled with his belief that nonwhite immigration threatens the West.

One of the greatest challenges in combating fascism, both in the early-to-mid-twentieth century and today, is getting comfortable, middle-class, politically moderate people to understand that its adherents *actually mean what they are saying*. Musk's favorite politician in Britain—Rupert Lowe of the far-right Restore Britain Party—has called for the deportation of almost every immigrant in the U.K., which Musk too has endorsed.*

Such large-scale mass expulsions of legal residents are rare. The closest modern analogue is Idi Amin's expulsion of Uganda's Asian population. The famously insane tyrant forced out 80,000 legal residents in the 1970s. Britain has a foreign-born population of around 13 million. So if we take Musk's calls for remigration at his word, he's envisaging an act of ethnic cleansing over 100 times as large. He apparently hopes to see this in all majority-white countries with large immigrant populations. There is nothing in the modern era that compares.

In their great book *Muskism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Quinn Slobodian and Ben Tarnoff take an exhaustive look at just about everything Musk has said on these and other topics. As they observe, we know Musk's preoccupation with declining birth rates is linked to his embrace of remigration because he's far more preoccupied with declining birth rates in some parts of the world than others. As Slobodian and Tarnoff conclude: "Musk's demographic panic is bound up with his concern for the survival of white civilization."

Here's the idea, put simply: Nonwhite immigration and reproduction threaten "white civilization." By definition, that threatens the survival of Western civilization (remember, to the fascist, race and culture are inseparable). The only hope for humanity's future is the West, which can only be preserved by halting and reversing declining white birth rates and migration to majority-white nations. In short, saving whiteness—via remigration and white reproduction—is essential to saving humanity.

What does Musk envision for those who are not privileged inheritors of Western civilization? On the one hand, he sometimes gives voice to the hope—albeit vaguely—that his companies' breakneck development of AI and robotics will unlock a future of widespread, drudgery-free abundance. He has flirted with progressive ideas like universal basic income to spread the fruits of technological advancement.

But it's difficult to take all that seriously in light of Musk's emergent fascist politics. Musk—whose contributions to combating global warming are unquestioned—knows what the models show: Under plausible climate scenarios, large additional swaths of the earth will be rendered uninhabitable. That could mean much more human misery and/or dramatically scaled-up mass migrations in the future.

Here's where Musk's well-known fondness for terms like *empathy gene* and *suicidal empathy* enters the chat. As Slobodian and Tarnoff document, Musk's pronouncements amount to suggesting that "civilization" is committing "suicide" when Western countries allow migration while showing too much "empathy." Musk insists this constitutes allowing "the Rape of Europe" by nonwhite immigrants. He has absurdly claimed that hordes of thousands are invading "lovely towns" of 500 people throughout the U.K. and "raping the kids." The idea of nonwhite predation on Aryan women is, of course, a core historical fascist narrative.

But the real intent behind Musk's indictment of "suicidal empathy" appears to be future-focused too. In an interview, Tarnoff points out that Musk's imagined future of humanoid robots and AI can be squared with his hatred of mass migration. "You reduce your reliance on immigration as a labor source if you automate more labor," Tarnoff tells us, noting that in this scenario, AI and robots might then be pressed into service to "restrict immigration."

In this context, we believe it's not an accident that Musk explicitly denigrated "civilizational suicidal empathy" while his Department of Government Efficiency decimated the budget of USAID, which helped produce hundreds of thousands of deaths abroad. That was a test run: If Musk's robot-and-AI utopia fails to produce mass abundance for the global poor, and global warming spurs more suffering and more migrations, saving human "civilization" will require dispensing with the empathy gene: It will give us the fortitude to cut loose all that third-world civilizational dead weight.

"Musk's vision of the world is extremely anti-humanitarian," Tarnoff tells us. "Empathy enables human beings to relate to one another across differences. And that is very threatening to Musk's vision." In Musk's future, Tarnoff continues, "the vast majority of humanity is expelled from the productive process." In a sense, Tarnoff says, Musk's logic is ultimately "eliminationist."

Musk often speaks about his goal to save the "light" of human "consciousness." It's a tellingly cold formulation. It doesn't entail a concern for actual human beings. It just requires preserving the select and their descendants—perhaps through mind merges with digitally superintelligent machines, or behind the walls of vast Muskian compounds guarded by humanoid robots, or on faraway planets.

"Whatever happens, we have got the spaceships, and they do not," Musk posted recently. As chronicled in *Muskism*, that alludes to a quote from a nineteenth-century colonialist celebrating the machine gun's power to put down colonial subjects. If the global race war doesn't accomplish Musk's objectives, there's always interplanetary escape—or perhaps the extermination of the brutes left behind on land with the spaceships' lasers. Those who call themselves inheritors of "Western civilization," then, are making a coded declaration of privilege: We get to be on the spaceships. The savages do not.

Understood this way, it all looks like some supercharged Muskian version of the "reactionary modernism" that John Ganz frequently discusses. Technology will be used to fortify and harden global hierarchies and protect those chosen to carry humanity forward from the disposable hordes. Hypermilitarized borders and violent pogroms will grow even more necessary as human labor is replaced and climate-fueled global suffering produces more desperate migrations. Perhaps the robots—who have no empathy gene—will carry it all out.



We don't mean to oversell Musk's influence. He's not unstoppable. He often fails, is thwarted, or just doesn't follow through. He's also clearly not the only, or even primary, reason for the global reemergence of fascism. But he wields immense power.

Political theorist Stephen Lukes famously divided power into three dimensions: decision-making power (should we do A or B?), agenda-setting power (is it a choice between A and B, or B and C?), and ideological power (how do people perceive and understand A, B, and C?).

People who question Musk's influence note that his decision-making power is limited, as his DOGE fiasco revealed. But Musk has tremendous agenda-setting power. His white-nationalized Twitter—now X—is somewhat diminished by backlash but still helps shape how many journalists in developed countries interpret the world while enabling him to launder fascism for the mainstream. His deep embeddedness within the machinery of Western governments through immensely lucrative contracts in everything from space travel to national security means he has incredible power to derail the projects of modern states.

What about ideological power? It is bad, very bad, that a fascist controls an information conduit that still shapes a fair amount of how many politicians and the press understand global events. Ideology is not just how we label ourselves, or what policies we endorse. It's also how we see the world. Because of Musk, more and more people have in their heads a fascist conception of the nation—that of an inexorable fusion of race and culture, under unrelenting racial siege.

Ultimately, Musk is playing a crucial role in the global fascist resurgence. He represents at once one of its loudest megaphones, the organizing space for its paramilitary wings, a fifth column of sorts inside the apparatus of many states, and the movement's bank.

It's hard to know what dealing with this should look like. Obviously it includes moving to break the power of the oligarchs in a broader sense. This must start with higher taxes on billionaires—and trillionaires. It requires stringent limits on the ability of people like Musk to singlehandedly spend immense sums on our elections, such as the extraordinary \$290 million he plowed into the 2024 contest. It should go without saying that breaking the power of the tech oligarchy—Democratic proposals along these lines would rupture tech monopolies, curb market dominance, and empower labor—is also essential, as is far-reaching AI regulation.

Another big question is whether liberal democratic governments should remain on Musk's disinformation platform. "X is now the mechanism through which white nationalist groups have organized violent riots three years in a row," Ian Dunt, a prominent U.K. commentator, tells us. "There's no good reason for the British government to remain on X. Its continued presence keeps journalists on the site, allowing Musk to mainstream far-right rhetoric." A future Democratic administration will have to weigh similar dangers.

Then there's what a future Democratic Congress can do. The Musk problem will have to be on its agenda in a serious and meaningful way. Claire Finkelstein, a professor of national security law at the University of

Pennsylvania, points out a core problem here: His many government contracts, and his access to privileged information, pose a “national security threat,” even as Space X itself is in many ways a “national security asset.” We need to know *a lot* more about what Musk’s contracts actually translate into in terms of his personal influence inside the government.

“Congress has to do rigorous oversight of Musk’s government contracts as well as his entire financial empire,” Finkelstein tells us.

Other ideas abound. Brian Beutler has urged the next Democratic administration to closely scrutinize the murky circumstances of Musk’s own immigration to the United States. Beyond such things, we’ll need a coordinated effort across liberal democracies. Appropriately, the targeting of apartheid in Musk’s native South Africa provides a model. We need an international consensus that recognizes the threat Musk poses and works against it with boycotts, with the withdrawal of support and funding, and with whatever creative tools are available. Politicians and publics alike need to think internationally.

The world’s richest man is participating in a transnational terror campaign. Ultimately, what’s really needed in response is a new mindset: We are now fighting a global battle against resurgent fascism. The fight is across nations and at every level of society. The response must be international, as well. Any path to a free international order, unthreatened by fascism, must run in part through breaking Musk’s power.

** This article originally misidentified Lowe’s party affiliation.*

Toby Buckle |

Toby Buckle is a former political activist and campaigner, host of the *Political Philosophy* podcast, and editor of *What is Freedom?* He podcasts and writes on U.S. and U.K. politics, liberalism, ideology, and religion.

Greg Sargent | |

Greg Sargent is a staff writer at *The New Republic* and the host of the podcast *The Daily Blast*. A seasoned political commentator with over two decades of experience, he was a prominent columnist and blogger at *The Washington Post* from 2010 to 2023 and has worked at Talking Points Memo, *New York* magazine, and the *New York Observer*. Greg is also the author of the critically acclaimed book *An Uncivil War: Taking Back Our Democracy in an Age of Disinformation and Thunderdome Politics*.

Read More: [Politics](#), [Elon Musk](#), [Belfast](#), [Fascism](#), [Big Tech](#)